The War of Truth

A Sermon
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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek; to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand."—Exodus 17:9.

THE CHILDREN of Israel were led out of Egypt with a strong hand and an out-stretched arm. They were conducted into the vast howling wilderness, where there were few, if any, permanent abodes of men. For some time they pursued their march in solitude, discovering wells and other traces of a nomadic population, but not meeting with any to disturb their loneliness. But it appears that then, as now, there were wandering tribes who, like the Bedouin Arabs, wandered to and fro through that very country which the people of Israel were now treading with their feet. These people, excited by the hope of spoil, fell suddenly upon the rear of the children of Israel, smote the hindmost of them in a most cowardly manner, took their spoil, and then swiftly decamped. Gathering strength and courage from this successful foray, they then dared to attack the whole host of Israel, which at that time must have amounted to two or three millions of souls, who had been brought out of Egypt and fed by miracle in the wilderness. This time Israel was not to be surprised; for Moses had said unto Joshua—"Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand;" pleading with God, in order that every blow struck with the sword might be made doubly powerful by the mighty assistance of God. We are told that a great victory was achieved; the Amalekites were put to the rout, and because of their unprovoked attack upon the children of Israel, they were condemned to extermination; for we find it written thus:—"Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Now, beloved, this scene of warfare is not recorded in Scripture as in interesting circumstance to amuse the lover of history, but it is written for our edification; for we remember the text which says—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our profit." There is some profit to be derived from this—and we believe a peculiar profit, too, since God was pleased to make this the first writing commanded by Divine authority as a record for generations to come. We think that the journeys of the children of Israel furnish us with many emblems of the journey of God's church through the world; and we believe, that this fight with Amalek is a metaphor and an emblem of that constant and daily fight which all

God's people must carry on with sins without and sins within. This morning I shall more particularly confine myself to *sin without*; I shall speak of the great battle which at the present moment is being waged for God and for his truth, against the enemies of the Cross of Christ. I shall endeavour, first, to make a few remarks upon *the war itself*, then to review *the authorised method of warfare*, which is twofold—hard blows and hard prayers, and then I shall finish by *stirring up God's church* to great and earnest diligence in the warfare for God and for his truth.

I. First, then, we shall make some remarks upon THE GREAT WARFARE which we think is typified by the content between the children of Israel and Amalek.

First of all, note that this crusade, this sacred, holy war of which I speak, is *not with men*, but with Satan and with error. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood." Christian men are not at war with any man that walks the earth. We are at war with infidelity, but the persons of infidels we love and pray for; we are at warfare with any heresy, but we have no enmity against heretics; we are opposed to, and cry war to the knife with everything that opposes God and his truth: but towards every man we would still endeavour to carry out the holy maxim, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." The Christian soldier hath no gun and no sword, for he fighteth not with men. It is with "spiritual wickedness in high places" that he fights, and with other principalities and powers than with those that sit on thrones and hold sceptres in their hands. I have marked, however, that some Christian men—and it is a feeling to which all of us are prone—are very apt to make Christ's war a war of flesh and blood, instead of a war with wrong and spiritual wickedness. Have you never noticed in religious controversies how men will fall foul of each other, and make personal remarks and abuse each other? What is that but forgetting what Christ's war is? We are not fighting against men; we are fighting *for* men rather than *against* them. We are fighting for God and his truth against error and against sin; but not against men. Woe, woe, to the Christian who forgets this sacred canon of warfare. Touch not the persons of men, but smite their sin with a stout heart and with strong arm. Slay both the little ones and the great; let nothing be spared that is against God and his truth; but we have no war with the persons of poor mistaken men. Rome we hate even as we abhor hell, yet for her votaries we ever pray. Idolatry and infidelity we fiercely denounce, but the men who debase themselves by either of them are the objects not of wrath, but pity. We fight not against the men, but against the things which we consider in God's sight to be wrong. Let us always make that distinction, otherwise the conflict with Christ's church will be degraded into a mere battle of brute force and garments rolled in blood; and so the world will again be an Aceldama—a field of blood. It is this mistake which has nailed martyrs to the stake and cast confessors into prison, because their opponents could not distinguish between the imaginary error and the man. While they spoke stoutly against the seeming error; in their ignorant bigotry they felt that they must also persecute the man, which they need not and ought not to have done.

I will never be afraid to speak out my mind with all the Saxon words I can get together, and I am not afraid of saying hard things against the devil, and against what the devil teaches; but with every man in the wide world I am friends, nor is there one living with whom I am at enmity for a moment any more than with the babe that has just been brought into the world. We must hate error, we must abhor falsehood; but we must not hate men, for God's warfare is against sin. May God help us always to make that distinction.

But now let us observe that the warfare which the Christian carries on, may be said for his encouragement, to be a most *righteous* warfare. In every other conflict in which men have engaged, there have been two opinions, some have said the war was right, and some have said it was wrong; but in regard to the sacred war in which all believers have been engaged, there has been only one opinion among right-minded men. When the ancient priest stirred up the Crusaders to the fight, he made them shout *Deus vult—God wills it*. And we may far more truly say the same. A war against falsehood, a war against sin, is God's war; it is a war which commends itself to every Christian man, seeing he is quite certain that he has the seal of God's approval when he goes to wage war against God's enemies. Beloved, we have no doubt whatever, when we lift up our voices like a trumpet against sin, that our warfare is justified by the eternal laws of justice. Would to God that every war had so just and true an excuse as the war which God wages with Amalek—with sin in the world!

Let us recollect again, that it is a war of the *greatest importance*. In other wars it is sometimes said—"Britons! fight for your hearths and your homes, for your wives and for your children—fight and repel the foe!" But in this war it is not merely for our hearths and for our homes, for our wives and for our children, but it is for something more than this. It is not against them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but it is a fight for souls, for eternity, against those who would plunge man into eternal perdition, a fight for God, for the deliverance of men's souls from wrath to come. It is a war which ought, indeed, to be commenced, to be followed up, and carried out in spirit, by the whole army of God's elect, seeing that no war can be more important. The instrumental salvation of men is above all things the highest object to which we can attain, and the routing of the foes of truth is a victory beyond all things to be desired. Religion must be the foundation of every blessing which society can hope to enjoy. Little as men think it, religion has much to do with our liberty, our happiness, and our comfort. England would not have been what it now is, if it had not been for her religion; and in that hour when she shall forsake her God, her glory shall have fallen, and "Ichabod" shall be written upon her banners.

In that day when the Gospel shall be silenced, when our ministers shall cease to preach; when the Bible shall be chained; in that day—God forbid it should ever come to pass—in that day, England may write herself among the dead, for she hath fallen, since God hath forsaken her, seeing she hath cast off her allegiance to him. Christian men, in this fight for

right, ye are fighting for your nation, for your liberties, your happiness and your peace; for unless religion, the religion of heaven be maintained, these will most certainly be destroyed.

Let us reflect, in the next place, that we are fighting with insidious and very *powerful foes*, in this great warfare for God and Christ. Let me again make the remark, that whilst speaking of certain characters, I am not speaking of the men, but of their errors. At this time we have peculiar difficulties in the great content for truth—peculiar, because very few appreciate them. We have enemies of all classes, and all of them far wider awake than we are. The infidel hath his eyes wide open, he is spreading his doctrines everywhere; and while we think—good easy men—that full surely our greatness is ripening, that frost is nipping many of our fair shoots, and unless we awaken, God help us! In almost every place infidelity seems to have a great away; not the bold bragging infidelity of Tom Payne, but a more polite and moderate infidelity; not that which slayeth religion with a bludgeon, but that which seeks to poison it with a small dose of poison, and goeth its way, and saith still it hath not hurt public morals. Everywhere this is increasing; I fear that the great mass of our population are imbued with an infidel spirit. Then we have more to fear than some of us suppose from Rome; not from Rome openly; from that we have little to fear; God hath given to the people of England such a bold Protestant spirit, that any open innovation from the Pope of Rome would be instantly repelled; but I mean the Romanism that has crept into the Church of England under the name of Puseyism. Everywhere that has increased; they are beginning to light candles on the altar, which is only a prelude to those greater lights with which they would consume our Protestantism. Oh! that there were men who would unmask them! We have much to fear from them; but I would not care one whit for that if it were not for something which is even worse. We have to deal with a spirit, I know not how to denominate it, unless I call it a spirit of moderatism in the pulpits of protestant churches. Men have begun to rub off the rough edges of truth, to give up the doctrines of Luther and Zwingle, and Calvin, and to endeavour to accommodate them to polished tastes. You might go into a Roman Catholic chapel now-a-days, and hear as good a sermon from a Popish priest as you hear in many cases from a Protestant minister, because he does not touch disputed points, or bring out the angular parts of our Protestant religion. Mark, too, in the great majority of our books what a dislike there is to sound doctrine! the writers seem to fancy that truth is of no more value than error; that as for the doctrines we preach, it cannot matter what they are; still holding that

"He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

There is creeping into the pulpits of Baptists and every other denomination, a lethargy and coldness, and with that a sort of nullification of all truth. While they for the most part preach but little notable error, yet *the truth* itself is uttered in so minute a form that no one detects it, and in so ambiguous a style, that no one is struck with it. So far as man can do it, God's arrows are blunted, and the edge of his sword is turned in the day of battle. Men do

not hear the truth as they used to. The velvet mouth is succeeding to the velvet cushion, and the organ is the only thing in the building which giveth forth a *certain* sound. From all such things, "good Lord deliver us!" May heaven put an end to all this moderatism; we want out-and-out truth in these perilous days; we want a man just now to speak as God tells him, and care for nobody. Oh! if we had some of the old Scotch preachers! Those Scotch preachers made kings tremble; they were no men's servants; they were very lords, wherever they went, because each of them said, "God has given me a message; my brow is like adamant against men; I will speak what God bids me." Like Micah, they said, "As the Lord my God liveth, whatsoever my God saith unto me, that will I speak." Heroes of the truth, soldiers of Christ awake! Even now there are enemies. Think not that the fight is over; the great warfare of truth waxes more hot and fierce than ever. Oh! soldiers of Christ! take your swords from your scabbards! stand up for God and for his truth again, lest a free grace gospel should be forgotten.

Let me just say, once more, concerning this war, that it is one that is to be of *perpetual duration*. Let us recollect, my beloved, that this war between right and wrong must be continued, and never must cease until truth has the victory. If you suppose that our forefathers did enough for truth and for God, and that you may be idle, you have made a great mistake. Until that day when the might with the right, and the right with the might shall be, we must never sheathe our swords; until that happy hour when Christ shall reign, when he shall be Master of all lands, when "swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks," and men shall not learn way any more; until that day the conflict is to be kept up. Let no man think we are in such a position that we have no need for watchfulness: terrible as the war has been before, it is as terrible now, though in another manner. We have not now to resist unto blood, striving against sin, but we have need of as stern a power of resistance as ever was possessed by martyrs and confessors in days gone by. Brethren, we must awake; the army must be aroused, the soldiers of the Lord must be quickened to a consciousness of their position. Now, now, we blow the trumpet; rush to the fight ye slumbering soldiers! Up, up, up! Let your banners wave, and let your swords be taken from your scabbards; it is a day of fight—a day of war and contention.

I cannot, however, conclude this section of my discourse without remarking that it is not merely error in religion with which we have to fight, but error in practice. Oh! beloved this world is a wicked world still, and London is an abominable city still. We have a fine gloss everywhere—a fair exterior, but, alas, within the hidden parts sin is still dominant. This is the great city of pretence, the gaudy house of sham, the foul home of pollution. Our streets are lined with fair houses; but what have we behind them? what have we there, in the very vitals of our city? This city is a colossal culprit, it is a behemoth sinner, and everywhere there are those who live in the vilest of vices, and yet go unchecked and unreproved, for it is unfashionable to tell men of their sins and there are few who have the spirit to speak

out plainly of men's sins. When we consider the mass of female profligacy which numbers it votaries by tens of thousands, are we not driven to conclude that the same sin must be rife enough with *men*. And ah! that there should be need to utter it. Are not the men who ensnare and seduce the poor unfortunates, allowed to enter society as respectable and moral. What is this but abominable hypocrisy. We are greater sinners in London than many suppose. Everything is painted over. But think not that you can deceive God in this way? Sin is stalking through the land at a horrid pace; iniquity still runs down our streets, covered up, it is true, not open sin, but still offensive alike to God and to good men. Oh! my brethren, the world is not good yet; it is filmed over, but all the while the loathsome disease lurks within. Up, again, I say, soldiers of Christ; the war against sin is not finished, it is scarce begun.

II. But now, secondly, we have to notice, briefly the APPOINTED MEANS OF WARFARE. When Amalek came out against Israel, God appointed two means of combating them. If he had chosen, he could have sent a wind and driven them away, or have cut off their hosts by the blast of the pestilence; but it did not so please him; for he would put honor upon human effort, and, therefore, he said to Joshua, "Choose out your men, and go fight with Amalek." It is true Joshua might, by God's strength, have overcome the foe; but says God, "While I honor human effort, I will still make men see that God doeth all. Moses! go up to yonder hill; stand there in prayer, hold up thy rod, and whilst the soldiers of Joshua rush into the fight, Moses shall plead, and you shall be unitedly successful. Your prayer, O Moses, without the sword of Joshua, shall not prosper; and the sword of Joshua, without the rod of Moses, shall not be effectual." The two ways of fighting sin are these—hard blows and hard prayers.

First, the church must employ hard blows and hard fighting against sin. It is of no use for you to shut yourselves up in your houses, and pray to God to stay sin, unless you go and do something yourselves. If you pray away till you are dumb, you shall never have a blessing unless you exert yourselves. Let the farmer pray for a harvest; will he ever have it, unless he ploughs the field and then sows his seed? Let the warrior pray for victory, and let his soldiers stand peacefully to be shot at, will he gain a triumph? No, there must be an active exercise of the power given by God, or else prayer without it will be of no avail. Let us, then, brethren and sisters, each in our spheres, deal hard blows at the enemy. This is a fight in which all can do something who are the Lord's people. Those who halt upon there crutches can use them for weapons of war, as well as the mighty men can wield their swords! We have each an allotted work to do, if we are the Lord's elect; let us take care that we do it. You are a tract distributor; go on with your work, do it earnestly. You are a Sunday-school teacher; go on, do not stay in that blessed work, do it as unto God, and not as unto man. You are a preacher; preach as God giveth you ability, remembering that he requireth of no man more than he hath given to him; therefore, be not discouraged if you have little success, still go

on. Are you like Zebulon, one that can handle the pen? Handle it wisely; and you shall smite through the loins of kings therewith. And if you can do but little, at least furnish the shot for others, that so you may help them in their works of faith and their labours of love. But let us all do something for Christ. I will never believe there is a Christian in the world who cannot do something. There is not a spider hanging on the king's wall but hath its errand; there is not a nettle that groweth in the corner of the churchyard but hath its purpose; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze but accomplisheth some divine decree; and I will never have it that God created any man, especially any Christian man, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for an end. Find out what that end is; find our your niche, and fill it. If it be ever so little, if it is only to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, do something in this great battle for God and truth. Joshua must go out and take his men. I think I see him; he appears to have been a man of war from his youth; but what a motley host he had to choose from! Why, they were a set of slaves; they had never seen a sword in their lives, except in the hands of the Egyptians; they were poor, miserable creatures; they were cowards when they saw their old enemies at the Red Sea, and now their weapons were those which were washed up from the Red Sea, and their regimentals were of all descriptions upon earth. Joshua, however, chooses out the strongest of them, and says, "Come with me." It was indeed, as one called it, a "ragged regiment" with which he went to fight: and yet the ragged regiment was the victorious one. Joshua won the day against the Amalekites, who had been trained to a predatory life. So, ye children of God, ye may know little of the tactics of warfare, your enemies may overthrow you in arguments, and annihilate you in logic; but, if you are God's children, they that are with you are more than a match for your foes; you shall live to see them yet dead upon the field; only fight on with faith in God, and you shall be victorious.

But this is not all. Joshua might have fought; but he would have been routed, had it not been for Moses on the brow of the hill. They were both necessary. Do you not see the battle! It is not on a very large scale, but it is still worthy of your earnest attention. There is Amalek, rushing to the war with discordant cries; see, Israel is repulsing them, and Amalek flees! But what is it that I notice? Now Israel turns back and flees; now again they rally and Amalek is put to the flight! Lo! they are cut to pieces by the sword of Joshua, and mighty Amalek wavers like the corn beneath the mower's scythe. The crowd of Amalek are dropping. But again! again the battle wavers; Joshua flees; but once again he rallies his troops! And have you not observed the wonderous phenomenon? There, on the brow of the hill stands Moses. You will notice that when his hands were outstretched, Israel routed Amalek; but the moment when from weariness he dropped his hands, then Amalek had a temporary victory; and when again he held up his rod, Israel routed the foe. Each time the hand of prayer fell down, victory wavered between the combatants. Do you see the venerable intercessor? Moses, being an aged man, becomes weary from standing so many hours, they seat him upon a stone;

still, arms are not iron, and the hands are drooping; but see! his eyes are flashing fire, and his hands are lifted up to heaven; tears are beginning to flow down his cheeks and his ejaculatory prayers are going to heaven like so many darts, which shall find their target in the ear of God. Do you see him, He is the hinge of victory; as he falters Amalek prevails; and as he is strong the chosen people gain the victory. See! Aaron is holding his hand for a moment; and anon Hur is supporting it, and the good old man changes his hands, for the battle lasts all day long, and in the hot sun it is wearisome work to hold them in one position. But see how manfully he holds them; stiff, as though they were cut out of stone; weary and worn, still his hands are out-stretched, as if he were a statue, and his friends assist his zeal. And see now, the ranks of Amalek are broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They fly! they fly! Still his hands are motionless; still they fight; still the Amalekites fly; still Joshua prevails, until at last all the foes lie dead on the plain, and Joshua returns with the shout of joy.

Now this teaches that there must be prayer as well as effort. Minister! preach on; you shall have no success unless you pray. If you do not know how to wrestle with God on your knees, you will find it hard work to wrestle with men on your feet in the pulpit. You may make efforts to do so, but you shall not be successful, unless you back up your efforts with prayer. You are not so likely to fail in your efforts as in your prayers. We never read that Joshua's hand was weary with wielding the sword, but Moses' hand was weary with holding the rod. The more spiritual the duty, the more apt we are to tire of it. We could stand and preach all day, but we could not be in our closets all day one-half so easily. To spend a night with God in prayer would be far more difficult than to spend a night with men in preaching. Oh! take care, take care, church of Christ, that thou dost not cease thy prayers! Above all, I speak to my own much loved church, my own people. You have loved me, and I have loved you, and God has given us great success, and blessed us. But, mark, I trace all of it to your prayers. You have assembled together in multitudes, perfectly unparalleled, to pray for me on each Monday evening, and I know I am mentioned at your family altars, as one who is very dear to your hearts; but I am afraid lest you should cease your prayers. Let the world say, "Down with him;" I will stand against them all, if you will pray for me; but if you cease your prayers it is all up with me and all over with you. Your prayers make us mighty; the praying legion is the thundering legion. If I might compare myself to a military commander, I should say, that when I see my men rise to pray in such large numbers, I feel like Napoleon, when he sent out his old guards. The battle had wavered; "There," said he, "they go; now the victory is sure." Or, like our own guards, the black caps, who, wherever they went carried victory with them. The praying legion is a thundering legion everywhere. Men can stand against anything but prayer. We would pray the very gates of hell off their hinges, if we could pray as some men have done. Oh! that we had might in prayer. Do not, I beseech you, I entreat you, do not cease to pray; cease what you please, but do not give up that; down on

your knees, wrestle with God, and verily the Lord our God will bless us, "and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

III. And now I am to close up with just a few remarks, in the third place, TO STIR YOU UP TO THE WARFARE. Remember, O children of God, that there are many things that should make you valiant for God and for his truth. The first thing I will bring to your remembrance is the fact, that this warfare in which you are engaged is an *hereditary* warfare; it is not one which *you* began, but it is one which has been handed to you from the moment when the blood of Abel cried aloud for vengeance. Each martyr that has died has passed the blood-red flag to the next, and he in his turn has passed it on to another. Every confessor who has been nailed to the stake to burn, has lit his candle, and handed it to another, and said, "Take care of that!" And now here is the old "sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Remember what hands have handled the hilt; remember what arms have wielded it; remember how often it has "pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." Will you disgrace it. *Will you disgrace it*? There is the great banner: it has waved in many a breeze; long ere the flag of this our land was made, this flag of Christ was born aloft, Will you stain it? *Will you stain it*? Will you not hand it to your children, still unsullied, and say, "Go on, go on; we leave you the heritage of war; go on, go on, and conquer. What your fathers did, do you again; still keep up the war, till time shall end." I love my Bible because it is a Bible baptized with blood; I love it all the better, because it has the blood of Tyndal on it; I love it, because it has on it the blood of John Bradford, and Rowland Taylor, and Hooper; I love it, because it is stained with blood. I sometimes think I like the baptismal pool because that has been stained with blood, and is now upon the continent, forbidden by law. I love it, because I see in it the blood of men and of women who had been martyred, because they loved the truth. Will you not, then, stand by the banner of truth, after such an illustrious pedigree of warriors have held it in their hands?

I would that I could have addressed you as I desired, but my voice fails me; I cannot, therefore, urge you, except by one consideration, and that is, the prospect of ultimate victory. It is certain that ere long we shall triumph; therefore let us not give up the fight. I have been much gratified of late to hear that there is a revival in the ranks of Christ's church; here and there I hear of great evangelists who are starting up. Some have said to me, when they have mentioned their names, "What say you to them?" My answer is, "Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets!" Oh! that God might send thousands and thousands of men, who would gather multitudes together to hear his word. I would that the day were come, when every church and every chapel in England were as full of souls as this, and as large as this. I do think the churches are reviving; but if they are not, still victory is certain—God will still get the victory; Jehovah will triumph. Satan may dream he will, but he will not. Therefore, men and brethren, on to victory; let the crown that is before you, nerve you to the fight; to victory; to victory; and on, on, on! for God is with you. Remember the great

intercessor; Christ is on the hill, and whilst you are in the valley he pleads, and must prevail, therefore, go on, and conquer, for Christ's sake!

I can no longer address you, but must finish up by repeating the words with which I always like to conclude my sermons: "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!" Oh! that ye would believe in Christ; oh! that God would give you faith to put your trust in him; this is the only way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."